Sharda Granth Mala-3

Icons of Kashmir

KSHEMENDRA

Pradeep Koul

Publication Division
SANJEEVANI SHARDA KENDRA
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A Word To The Reader

It is natural to the people living in exile in their own country, faced with decimation of their cultural icons, with their culture and history being constantly underminded to be concerned about the preservation of their ethical tradition and to make efforts for its dissemination especially to the younger generations. More than their loss of homes and hearths, land and other material positions it is the looming loss of identity that perturbs the Exiled Minority of Kashmir.

Indeed preservation of this thousands-of-years old culture is a question that should concern the whole nation of India. In haunts the people who were the only inhabitants of Kashmir a thousand years ago and have been forced into a life of exile today.

In Kashmir history this situation i.e. exile, has arisen several times during the last six or seven centuries. History, infact, has been repeating itself rather frequently in Kashmir. Hence the imperative for fortifying the identity, ethos and culture of the exiled Kashmiris is great, not only for their sake but also for the sake of national integrity.

Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra has started publication on icons, aspects, symbols and facets of the glorious ethos of Kashmir, both past and present to address these imperatives. The history, traditions and essence of Kashmir would thus be preserved and at the same time broadcast to increase the awareness of the public as well to prevent the distortionist design of defacing them.

Kashmir has been the major centre of Sanskrit language and literature. It has birthed great savants Vasugupt, Somanand, Utpaldev, Abhinav Gupt, Kshemendra, Mammat, Kalhan Pandit, Jagdhar Bhat, Bilhan, Vaman, Rudrat, Anand Vardhan, Udbhat, Kayat, Bhamah, Kshemraja, Jonaraja, Shrivara, Shuka and others. These were shaiva philosophers, scholars, thinkers, historians and grammarians who rose from the Kashmir soil established their credentials the world over and

gave new directions to the society and community. The Ancient shrines, cultural centres, seats of learning, grand temples, ashrams etc. are wittness to the grand archeology and architecture of Kashmir and invite attention of the antiquarians inciting them to further investigate and inquire into this grand legacy.

As a first step towards this great endeavour of enlivening the grand traditions, throwing light on the great savants, bringing to fore the foremost icons of this glorious tradition, the Publications Division, Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra is bringing out this series of public utility, informative, introductory monographs with the twin objectives of raising public awareness level of the people and facilitating further research into the areas that are being allowed to waste into oblivion, under obvious designs. Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra's efforts are aimed at stemming this deluge threatening to drown the real identity of Kashmir.

Each of the monographs shall focus on one subject, issue, icon or symbol. Brought out on a no-profit-no-loss basis they shall be priced to be within the reach of all and shall be written in an essay comprehensible style. The aim is to present facts, life and works in simple comprehensible manner avoiding scholastic didactism which has prevented access of the lay public to many of the grand literary, philosophical works. At the same time many artifacts of art, culture and lore have not seen the light of publication. Such facets shall also be highlighted to bring out the multifaceted character of this lore and legacy. It is hoped that the endeavour shall attain its objectives with your involvement, interest initiative and participation for in the ultimate analysis culturo-ethical endeavours are only as good as the particpatory response from the general community.

Contents

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The cultural traditions of India trace their origin to Mahabharata, Ramayana and even beyond to the vedic times. Cultural activity is an extensive mental and physical effort in which people pour forth their creative thoughts in a variety of ways like literature, drama, theatre, music, paintings sculpture, architecture and other varied but allied activities. Literature is an important part of the culture of a nation. It has been so in Indian culture. The Indian literary tradition has been in a continuous flow from the remote past to the modern times. This flow encompasses in its realm different smaller local streams till it takes the form of huge but sublime river Ganga.

Ksemendra is a very powerful current of this great river of Indian literature. His position is assured in the annals of not only India's but world's literary history by not only being a great poet but also a versatile genius. His masterly pen held sway in different fields of literary creativity, be it in history writing, religious and philosophical experimentation, Alankar Shastras (rhetorics) or in recording day to day activities of common man. He was by far the near complete literary figure whose sensibilities were widespread and plural.

Kshemendra's Time

Ksemendra is valuable to us from a chronological point of view. He gives us his time fairly accurately a trait which he seems to have imbibed from his great preceptor Abhinav Gupta. He points to this fact in the following verse.

आचार्य शेखरमणेर्विधाविवृतिकारण:
श्रुत्वाभिनवगुप्तख्यात् साहित्यं बोधवारिधे ।।

"From Sri Abninav Gupta, the Jewel among the preceptors, I learned literature."

The sense of Chronology is lamentably poor in Indian tradition, but happily it is not so in Kashmir. Here we see a mature sense of time and many authors have given allusions to their time. This makes

Ksemendra important to us. While telling us about his teachers, he says that the great Abhinav Gupta was one of his chief preceptors. He also writes about his patron king Anant dev of Kashmir. So we can fairly say that he was born around year 990 A.D. Pandit Madhu Sudan Kaul also coroborates this period as his probable time of birth. According to him Ksemendra must have died in 1065 A.D. But Ksemendra writes in the colophon of Dashavtar Charita that he finished it in the year 51 of Laukika Calender. This is about 1066 A.D. On this basis Dr. P.V. Kane and Dr. Suryakanta surmise and quite correctly that Ksemendra should have lived beyond 1066 A.D. We can safely say that he should have been a septuagenarian at the time of his death. King Kalasha was the ruler of Kashmir at that time.

Family

Ksemendra's Son somendra gives us a detailed account of his family tree. Somendra writes that during the reign of King Jaipida (751-782 A.D.) their ancestor Narendra was a minister. Narendra's Son was Bogyaendra (भौगेन्द्र). His son was Sindhu. Sindhu's son was Prakashendra and his son was Ksemendra. Some scholars think that Ksemendra had a brother whose name was Chakrapala. Many scholars do not agree, one reason being that Ksemendra's ancestors and even his son have suffix "Indra" at the end of their name. But it is also interesting to note that Kshemendra's grandfather Sindhu does not have suffix 'Indra' to his name. Who knows that Chakrapala was his brother, may be or may not be. It is a matter of conjecture and scrutiny. One thing is quite obvious that his family was attached to the court, and must have been highly influential and rich.

Childhood

Ksemendra belonged to a highly rich and influential family. It is quite natural that he was brought up in the lap of plenty and luxury. His father Prakashendra was a minister and was famous in he country for his generosity and learning. He was true to his name viz- 'Prakash' meaning Sheen and 'Indra' of the Lord of gods. 'Sheen of the Indra' when rendered into English. Ksemendra is proud of his father and like a faithful son thinks highly of him. In Auchitvicharcharcha he writes :-

आसीत्प्रकाशीन्द्र इति प्रकाशः काश्मीरदेशे त्रिदशेश्वरश्री,
अभूद गृहे यस्य पवित्रसत्त्रमच्छित्रमग्रासनमग्रजानाम ।।

"In the land of Kashmir a Brahaman named Prakashendra lived. He was splendid like Indra himself. He performed Yajnas and other sacred rites. He respected Brahmans." In the following verse he writes that in his house was a grand temple, on his directions great mural paintings were painted depicting various Gods and Goddesses. He would regularly offer cows, land and houses to the needy. While engaging in such acts of charity he passed away. The impression that one gets is that Ksemendra's father was not only rich but noble as well. He was deeply religious. The paintings on the walls of Gods/ Goddesses suggest that the art of mural painting was very old in Kashmir.

Mural painting must have attained a high level of finesse. The religious atmosphere at home and the personality of his father must have shaped the tender heart of Ksemendra and helped him to gain what we see later on an effusion of unsurpassed versatillity. The religious and scholastic environment at home during his formative years and adolescence shaped his moral views also. This influence is discernible when he wrote the celebrated 'Auchitya Vichar Charcha', a book on properiety.

Schooling

It is interesting for us to know about the mode of schooling in those times. Were students attending the schools as they are now ? Were the Gurukuls and Pathshalas organised on a set pattern ? Were they were state aided or not ? We do not know because the detailed account of the social activity of those times is not available to us. But there were schools and Pathshallas run by private teachers. Ksemendra being rich and the son of a famous minister got the best possible education. It seems that his father saw to it that his son received top of the line schooling available at that time. In his late teens he bowed at he feet of Sri Abhinav Gupta. He received instruction in various fields of literature under this great preceptor. Could there be a better

teacher available in India or elsewhere other than the great Sri Abhinav Gupta? At his feet he learnt the fine subtleties of literature. It is worth mentioning that Ksemendra was not a born poet like Kalidasa or Bhavabuti, but he worked hard on his talents. He must have been doubly assisted by the class instruction that he received from Sri Abhinav Gupta. This made him a poet of versatillity and undoubtedly of repute.He was greatly influenced by the overwhelming persona of Abhinav Gupta and called him diamond among the precepors.

It is markedly unusual that he was not blown over by the fame and eminence of his master preceptor. He held his own. He had his own views and held to them stoically. Though Ksemendra has great reverence for Sri Abhinav Gupta but he gives credit for his spiritual upliftment to Sri Sompada, who was his spiritual Guru. Sri Sompada was a vashnavite Saint who influenced Ksemendra greatly and under his influence he turned a vashnavite. In Brihat Katha Manjri he writes:

श्रीमद्भागवताचार्य सोमपादाब्जरेणुभिः ।
धन्यतां यः परं नारायणपरायणः ।।

"under the feet of Srimad Sompada the vashnavite teacher. I was blessed, and turned a devotee of Narayana (Vishnu). He had read from another teacher Gangaka. He has not mentioned what he learnt from him. It is obvious that Gangaka must have been a renowed teacher. Thus Ksemendra had three preceptors Sri Abhinav Gupta, Sri Sompada and Gangaka. It is curious that while his father was a staunch Shaiva he turns a Vashnavite.

Inspiratons

According to V.M. Lele he started writing Brihat Katha manjri in 1037 A.D. It is about twelve to fifteen years after the passing away of his great preceptor Sri Abhinav Gupta. What was he doing all these years ? was he learning more and watching the world with his own insight free from the influence of his eminent preceptors ? An emphatic yes, prehaps is the answer. As his mind shows, he wanted to have an independent vision of this world. Here lies his greatness, his versatality and his non conformist attitude, which is reflected in his works. It is

worth knowing that who were his sources of Inspiration. Although we know that Gangaka, Sri Abhinava and Sri Sompada were his preceptors, but one feels like asking whom he held as his inspiration in addition to them.

Ksemendra like a dedicated and frank artist does not leave us in any doubt. He points very candidly towards it in such candid and free approach which makes him a source of joy to the reader. He does not leave anything to conjecture or mystery. In the whole Gamut of Sanskrit literature that was available to him he ranks Rsi Vyasa as the Chief source of his inspiration. It is the same Rsi who compiled Mahabharata and has become immortal in doing so. Ksemendra speaks about Rsi Vyasa in glorious terms and rates him as the supreme master. He prides in calling himself slave of Vyasa-"Vyasa Dasa". He became famous as Ksemendra Vyasa Dasa. in his famous work of Kavi-Kanthabharna he called Rsi Vyasa's Mahabharata as the 'Source of livelihood and earning of other poets." After Rsi Vyasa Ksemendra rates Kalidasa as a master writer. He had read all the available works of Kalidasa and was deeply influenced by the structural beauty of his works. The Similies, metaphors, symbols, figures of speech, impressions and sensitivity that Kalidasa uses in his works leaves Ksemendra spell bound and admiring. Even in these modern times Kalidassa invokes sheer magic in our minds which are now becoming insensitive to such things like literature and poerty. We seem to be floundering in the conflict of materialism and a growing deviant society. Happily Ksemendra comes to our help. He lifts our dampened spirits to a new high with his sublime and frank writing. He is as relevant as he was one thousand years ago. That is his uniqueness, his quality and his influence. In the north eastern part of the present Srinagar, near the foothills of Hari Parvat, in ancient times famous as Praduman Peetha is a Ganesha Temple which is very old. Near this temple are the sprawling ruins and wall made up of huge stones. These ruins are of once famous temple of Pravresha built by Praversen II. It has now been converted into a mosque of Bahudin. There is a cemetry in its precints. In the precints of this temple, Ksemendra delivered lectures and taught students. This place is also assoicated with Rsi Vyasa, and

is called 'Vyasa Pindav', meaning the seat of Vyasa. On Vyasa Purnima till very recent times people would go and pay their respects to this place, for this place symbolised both the master and his 'Dasa' (Rsi Vyasa and Ksemendra). This interesting information was given to me by one of the foremost scholars of sanskrit and shaiva philosphy as well as a world renowed manuscriptologist Pandit Dina Nath Yaksh Shastri some months before his death. It is highly probable that this information is nearer to truth not only on the authority of its eminent source but also on account of the fact that there are hundreds of such places in Kashmir which were pilgrim centres associated with famous personalities. They are now almost forgotten, the reason being incessant Islamic Jehad waged over hundreds of years on the civilization of Kashmir by the successive Muslim rulers and religious leaders both of Sunni or Shia dispensation. Their aim has been to destroy the mighty civilization and culture. The influences of this great civilization can never be obliterated from Kashmir because this culture is open and assmilative. It is naturally in consonance with the positive traits of universal human endevour.

Ksemendra's Religious leanings

Prakashendra - the illustrious father of Ksemendra was a staunch Shaiva. He had built a grand temple dedicated to Lord Shiva whose walls were decorated with fine mural paintings for which Kashmir was famous. Even Mirza Haider Dughlat, who ruled Kashmir in about 1550 AD was fascinated when he first saw the remnants of such grand wall paintings on the temple walls which were destroyed by Muslim rulers before him (For detail read his Tarikhi-Rashidi)

It was natural that in his early childhood and then in his adolescence he was influenced by the Shaiva doctrine. It is strange that even the great Sri Abhinav gupta does not strengthen his devotion to Shaiva philosphy despite being his teacher. It is clear that Ksemendra must have been of a fiercely independent mind to the extent of not being influenced by his eminent preceptor (Sri Abhinav). Be it so as it was. His Shaiva faith does not hold for a long time and finally under the influence of Sri Sompada he turns a Vashnavite all his life as is evident

from his last great work Dash Avtar Charita which he finished in 1066 A.D. This work is a lucid account of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. But he does not stop here. His story is not that of first a Shaiva and then a Vashnavite but it is something more.

Ksemendra probed into the depths of other religions, especially of Buddhism. He was influenced by the Buddhist philosophy. Kashmir was a great centre of Mahayana Buddhism and it was from this place that it spread to Tibet, China, Central Asian region of khoton, Takla Makan, Kashgar etc. In Ksemendra's time all the three important religious philosophies were flourishing in Kashmir in harmonious relationship. It was a classic case of pluralism and diversity. Bodh Vihars, and temples were seen side by side. If emperor Lalityaditya constructed grand temples of Mukta Keshva and Muktaswamin, he also constructed a sprawling Vihara at his new capital ciy of Parihaspura. Thus Kashmir was a melting pot of various cultural and religious trends all deriving sustenence from its great cultural traditions.

Ksemendra was influenced by Buddhism. He wrote a celebrated Buddhist work named Baud Avdan Kalaplata. 'Avdan' means of pure and sublime nature. 'Avdan' (अवदान) is as important in Mahayana branch of Buddhism as Jataka (जातक) tales are in Hinyana branch. Baud Avdan Kalaplata deals with the previous births of the Buddha.

Thus Ksemendra is an ideal representative of the great Indian Tradition which believes that the truth is not the sole monoply of a single religion, a single Holy Book or of a single Prophet but that it is both transcendental and immanent in nature. The Truth, in fact is too vast and varied nature. It is transcendental as well as immanent in nature. The Truth, in fact is too vast and varied to be filled in the cup of a single philosophical thought, more so of a rigid and narrow one.

Ksemendra was a non conformist, an experimentallist, a person with an independent mind and gifted with a sense of keen observation. He was a social scientist or a modern day sociologist. He showed respect to all the three different systems of thought be it shaivate, vashnavite or Buddhist. What a pity that in this present age when man calls himself modern having a new vision, we are sadly fighting over

our faiths. People are killed, thrown out, children are orphaned for an unteneble reason that they do not belong to a particular faith. For Ksemendra, God was not like a stern, bearded person hurling thunderbolts, scourge and curses on non believers ! For him He was a source of infinite knowledge, and love.

Political and Geographical Kashmir in his Time

Kashmir was independent in Ksemendra's time. When he was born about 990 A.D. Kashmir was ruled by queen Didda. Kashmir was a bastion of Indian civilization. Al. Biruni writes in his Kitab-ul-Hind that after the raids of Mahmud Gaznavi many scholars and Pandits sought refuge in Kashmir. The borders were safe and a strict vigil was kept on the entry points on Panchal Dhara (present Pir Panchal) which were manned by strong contingents of troops. Despite these measures there was a sense of insecurity. Mahmud Gaznavi made serious attempts to capture Kashmir. He met with stiff resistence especially at the impregnable fortness of Loharkut (modern Lorain in Rajauri). His attempts were repulsed and beaten off. It made Kashmir rulers alive to a new situation. The immediate borders of Kashmir had been under seige from Muslim invaders and under the threat of sword people had been converted.

The greatest set back that Kashmir faced was the fall of Hindu Shahi Kings of kabul. These kings were brave and audacious. They repelled the invasious of Turks and others for a century and a half. Their last king Trilochanpal ultimately fell to Mahmud Gaznavi. Trilochanpal in order to repulse successive raids of Gaznavi sought assistance from Kashmir and other Hindu chiefs. Kashmir sent a strong force under its famed but haughty commander Tunga. The joint force was about to snatch victory when suddenly due to his foolhardiness Tunga decided to give up the guerilla tacties so effectively used by Shahi Kings. He came out in the open. This was the turning point and resulted in complete rout. Thus the grand Hindu Shahi Kings of Kabul became history. The citizenry was put to sword and forcebly converted to Islam. Kalhana writes in glorious terms about the Hindu Shahi Kings of Kabul, of their bravery and grandeur. He is heart broken by their

fall.

Hence in Ksemendra's time, Kashmir through strong vigil and bravery maintained independence which was kept up quite amazingly for another three hundred and fifty years. Still within Kashmir the situation was far from satisfactory. Feudal landlords called "Damar" were getting powerful. They were akin to present day Afgan warlords dictating the writ of the court and even making bold attempts to seize it. Government machinery was corrupt. The common man was fleeced by officers without mercy. Ksemendra witnessed the gradual decline of his patron king Anantdev. He was pained to see the disloyallity of his son Kalasha. Kalasha forced his father to abdicate the throne. Ananta reclaimed it but giving in to the cruel son's whims he handed over the throne to Kalasha. Kalasha proved to be a cruel and fickle king. Anant dev with his spirited queen-Suryamati retired to a secluded retreat where in 1081 AD he died. His queen consort suryamati committed Sati on the pyre of her harassed husband.

Ksemendra was witness to his situation. In his works he tries to educate the people about the impending external and internal dangers. He wants to raise the level of their conscience. A true patriot as he was, he believed that all these dangers could be countered if the rulers with their official machinery make a rapport with the masses. On the other hand he exhorts the people to lift their personal life and attitude to new heights. How right he was, has been vindicated by the historical events that followed.

It is amply clear that in his time even though Kashmir was not an imperial power as it was in the reign of king Lalityaditya, it still had a clout as a strong regional power and more importanly it was a great seat of learning. It had famous seats of learning such as sharda and vijeshwara (modern Bijebehara). There were fabulous works of art, great temples and viharas. It had developed its own spirit named Sharda; In Al-Biruni's time the script was called 'Sidh Matrika'. Sharda script is still in use in religious matters and it was employed for day to day work by both Hindus and Muslims just eight or nine decades ago. Kashmiri scholars and artisans contributed immensely to various fields

of learning like grammar, poeties, philosophy, architecture, astrology, medicine, sculpture, paintings, theatre etc. Kashmir was held in awe and had earned for itself the appellation of 'sharda desha' the land of the Goddess of learning.

Ksemendra and His tastes

While studying Ksemendra we find him a man of enviable tastes. Even for a brief moment he does not look stale. His is full of verve and vigour. He had varied tastes. But he never distanced himself from the dichotomy of life. A life where at one end he himself was rich almost like a royal, famous, influential; where as at the other end stood a vast multitude of people who were poor and struggling. He reached out to them, understood their agony, pain and suffering. Like his philanthropic father he too was saturated with humanism and kindness.

Ksemendra had delicate tastes. Born in a rich family he never felt pinch of want. He never looked to amass wealth. In fact he gave away more than what he received. A great patron of arts he always encouraged artists writers, scholars and students. He invited them to his home and gave scholarships to them. Philanthropy, for him was not only as means to attain 'Swarga' (heaven) but it was a means to contribute to the society in a meaningful way. In his works he writes ruefully about rich persons but obssessed with wealth, or about a miser who has penchant to amass more and more. In this way his riches become a large pool of stangnant water which cannot quench the thirst of any one. On the contrary it attracts pests and becomes a source of foul smell. Ksemendra was large hearted who desired to gain knowledge and contribute towards its dispersal. Like his eminent preceptor Sri Abhinav Gupta, he had many disciples. His son Somendra was one of his disciples. Ksemendra had large number of friends. He liked to enjoy the company of friends.

His friend cricle was large. Men of letters were his friends. Interestingly they did not belong to the same social group, and came from a cross section of the society. A tribute to his open mindedness. Whenever he saw a man of letters or talents he

became Ksemendra's friend. Among his friends were Ratan Simha, (a prince) Ramyasha, Devdhara, Virbhadra, Nakka, Sajnanand, Udhay Simha, Laxmanaditya etc. He had a well read scribe whose name was Sushri. He recorded all his works.

As stated earlier, Ksemendra had rich tastes. He had a delicate and sensitive mind. It was obvious that he liked theatre. He was deeply committed to it. He would watch plays staged in huge temple complexes or elesewhere. It is here important to mention that Kashmir had a very strong and vibrant tradition of theatre. In fact the origin of theatre is perhaps Kashmir – Bharat Muni who wrote first substantative treatise of theatrics lived either in Kashmir proper or in nearest proximity to it. This view is held by the majority of Indologists. The most important commentary on Bharat Muni's 'Natya Shastra' named Abhinav Bharti by Sri Abhinava was written in Kashmir. Sadly this great tradition has almost been lost now. In the present time "Band Pather" (बांड पअथर) is a very modest remnant of that great tradition. The reason is not difficult to find. Kashmir was subjected to persecution perpetrated by generations of zealous Islamic rulers, which almost destroyed its great traditions. Late Sri Gopi Nath Ji alias Gupa Baccha (गुप बच्चि) a renowed Pandit dancer and singer was a shining example of this tradition. It is unfortunate that we have no live record/ cassette or film of his scintillating, spiritual dance sequence.

Now Sh. Moti Lal Kemmu a famous theatre personality among others is doing his utmost to preserve Kashmiri theatre as well as its folk theatre (बांड पअथर). Coming to Kasmendra, he watched theatre avidly in the company of his friends. He got some of his education after watching theatre. He was fond of music. We cannot say what kind of music was played or heard or what were the instruments used. They must have not been radically different from those used now. He also had keen interest in paintings. He had developed high degree of proficiency in this art. He would like to listen to stories and other narratives in secluded places. In "Kavi Kantha Bharan" he writes :

"A poet should listen to songs, musical tales, folk lore, legends and attain proficiency in languages spoken by common people. This way he can hone his poetic skill".

He was widely travelled and it seems that he had a fairly adequate knowledge of Indian geography possible in those times, when this knowledge was derived from the narratives of travellers, personal acumen or hearsay. The exploits of "Kaṅkali" a courtesan in his work Samay Matrika reveals the geographical knowledge of the author.

It was natural that Ksemendra should write on varied subjects for he had varied interests which fortified his knowledge, expanded his vision and provided him with rare insight which very few people have attained. He was a person with an open mind and refined taste. He dressed impeccably. He was always in a clean raiment usually of silk. He would set a fashion statement whenever he moved out.

Essential Features of Ksemendra's writings

Ksemendra's writings have many features as well as qualities which was scarcely seen in his contemporaries or his predecessors. In a way he is of a different material and make. He seems now contemporary and now futuristic. He writings indicate a master craftsman at work who wields his pen with unusual competence. His eyes seem to grasp every detail. He weaves a multihued mosiac big in its swathe and intricate in pattern. Some of the characteristic features of his writings are :

1. A gamut of varied writings.
2. An unusual critical approach.
3. An astonishing word fund
4. A deep commitment to replace and reform.

We shall not give the detail of each of these features which is beyond the scope of this small book as well as beyond my humble competence. Yet a cursory glimpse of these features will not be out of place.

1. A gamut of varied writings

Ksemendra was probably last of the giants of Sanskrit literature. At least the evolution of the principles of poetics reached its pinnacle with his celebrated work 'Auchita Vichar Charcha'. Although important works like Kavya Prakasha, Sahita Darpan etc have been written after him but they are in no way near his writings which are varied. Nobody after him propounded or articulated any poetic principle like the Auchitya (Propriety) of the Ksemendra.

Dr. Surya Kanta, Dr. Keith, P.V. Kane, Dr. Raghvan, Dr. Lele etc have done in depth researches on Ksemendra. They are all unanimous that he wrote more than forty works. Out of them only twenty are available. These works have been written on different subjects. They are so different from each other that it requires very expansive understanding to be able to read his all works. Let us take into view his 'Nripavali'. The book is not available but Kalhana has mentioned it. Nripavali was a book on history. Now consider his other work 'Kavi Kantha Baran'. This work deals with poetry. This work instructs in the art of poetry and guides an aspiring poet in the art of writing. Now these two works one on history and the other on literature are poles apart in content, theme, and treatment. Still Ksemendra wrote them and wrote them well. Similarly his works on Ramayana and Mahabharata or on "Brihatkatha' constitute the other dimension of his writings. The work on Buddhism constitutes another area of his interest. Then there is the work of 'Kalavilas' where he depicts thugs and their art. How they loot and rob people, similarly in Smaymatrika he depicts the successful exploits of a courtesan 'Kankali'. She in her old age instructs her disciple, Kalavati, in the amorous art through which she disarms eminent men and eventually renders them powerless and penniless. In their pennury they are kicked out by her. 'Savo-Savak-opdesh' is his another work. In it he instructs both servant and the master to be true to their Dharma (duty). According to him a servant should be truthful and loyal to his master where as a master should be like a caring parent to a

servant. This is the other aspect of his writing. Similarly he has written over a range of subjects with finesse and mastery.

2. Critical approach in his writings

Ksemendra was deeply committed towards the welfare of the society. He held that a nation can never bceome strong and defend itself if its social structure is not just, ethical and interdependent. He looked at the society through the penetrating eyes of a sociologist. He was aware of the dangers that his beloved land faced externally and internally. He wanted to confront them. Externally, on the borders of Kashmir a new faith was sweeping across. It was uprooting old traditions and culture with merciless methods unknown in India. Internally the social fabric was weak. The internecine strife between feudal lords called Damars and Central authority of the king had weakened the state power. The situation deterioatedbecause of weak and inefficient monarchy which was not concerned with the welfare of the people. Corruption was rampant. Like a real patriot and a son of the soil, he became restless. He desperately wanted to stem the tide and reverse the rot that had set in the society. So he was bitter. This bitterness is reflected in his critical outpourings and in his Sarcasm. He castigates all, whether it be the king or the 'Kayastha' (Clerk), who were equally responsible for the social decay. He is bitter about honourable men who waste away wealth and energy over courtesans. He asks a servant to be dutiful and the master to be kind. He sarcastically asks them to shun their inhuman ways and return to noble life. Hence we see in Ksemendra a critical approach which to a modern reader may look sometimes an overdose. But Ksemendra could not help it, for he was in a hurry and the situation around him was one of decadence. So how could be tolerate it. The sensitive and patriotic soul in him turned critical.

3. A Huge word Fund

Ksemendra was extremely well-read, not only in Sanskrit literature but in local and other languages. These languages presented him with a treasure of words. Besides that his sanskrit learning

was exceptional. He had amazing command over different Grammatical traditions of Kashmir and outside. His style of usage of words is not possible without a deep and varied study. Now he uses a word which is so archaie that few people know it and now he uses a latest prevalent words or a colloquial word in the same sentence. It is not possible to understand him without a comprehensive study of the different dictionaries. The usage of non prevalent words with modern ones makes him interesting to study. A careful research in Ksemendra's word usage can give us a knowledge of words prevalent and in use in different times. This study can prove beneficial for studying evolution of Sanskrit language. It may be added that he was a master of words or we may say a poet of words who weaved a sublime magic with them. He uses similies and metaphors with telling effect, a trait that must have come to him from a thorough study of the poet of metaphors and similies – Kalidasa. The huge word fund at his command enabled him to portray various aspects of the social mechanisms. This was one of the reasons that enabled him to write so effectively on varied subjects and themes.

4. A deep commitment to replace and reform

His writings are not merely as wordsworth puts it "emotions recalled in tranquillity" but devoted to reform as well. He wields his pen in the spirit of a revolutionary. He is eager to reform the decadent society and replace it with a just system. His works like "Kalavilas', 'Samaymatrika', 'Darpdalan', 'Auchita-Vichar-Charcha', and 'Savyasavakopdesh' point towards his deep desire to replace and reform. He is the true son of Kashmir. He cannot bear to see decay. He cannot tolerate cruel kingships. He is restless and his writings reveal it in full fervour.

We behold in Ksemendra a poet, a critic, a revolutionary and visionary whose writings have an aroma of freshness, sarcasm, bitterness and above all, hope all mixed into one.

His works

Ksemendra was a prolific writer. He had an uncanny flair to write with authority on varied subjects. His style is a mixture of the sublime and sarcastic. His hold is smart and his mastery is lucid.

Ksemendra was a keen observer. He was rich but he did not confine himself in the cosy confines of his palatial home. He moved around, looked keenly into market places, went into the settlements of the poor and the exploited sections of the society. He was heart broken by the state of their wretched life. He beheld the profane and the evil in the society. He was bitter of official dom and how it had become a leech sucking the blood of the poor masses.

It is said that he wrote more than forty books. But only a few are extant and rest are lost. Here we give a list of his books that are available and also of those which are lost now.

List of Extant (Available) Books

1. Kalavilas (कलाविलास)
2. Suvrat tilak (सुवृत्ततिलक)
3. Charuchariya (चारुचार्या)
4. Lok-Prakash (लोकप्रकाश)
5. Bharat Manjiri (भरतमंजरी)
6. Ramayan Manjiri (रामायणमंजरी)
7. Brihat-Katha-Manjiri (बृहतकथामंजरी)
8. Samay Matrika (समयमातृिका)
9. Darpadalan (दर्पदलन)
10. Dash-Avtar-Charita (दशावतारचरित्र)
11. Kavi-Kantha-Bharan (कविकण्ठाभरण)
12. Narma mala (नर्ममाला)
13. Savi-Savikopdesh (सेव्यसेवकोपदेश)
15. Baud-avdan-kalaplata (बोधावदानकलपलता)

16. Nitikalptaru (नीतिकल्पतरु)
17. Chaturvarg Samgrah (चतुर्वसंग्रह)
18. Auchitavichar Charcha (औचित्यविचार चर्चा)
19. Vaysashtak (व्यासाष्टक)

List of some of lost works

1. Kanakjaniki (कनकजानकी)
2. Ksemendra Prakash (क्षेमेन्द्रप्रकाश)
3. Nripavali (नृपावली)
4. Yavan Panchisika (यवनपंचासिका)
5. Muktavali (मुक्तावली)
6. Lalitratanmala (ललितरत्नमाला)
7. Chitrabharat (चित्रभारत)
8. Nitilata (नितिलता) etc.

What a sad tale that all his works are not extant today !

Earlier works of Ksemendra

Now we come to the works of Ksemendra. We will not go in detail to describe all those works. We will, instead go on a creative journey with this master writer in such a way as if he were with us like a tourist guide pointing out the salient features of his works himself. As mentioned umpteen times, he wrote on a variety of subjects. Keith says that he was a polyglot (knowing many languages). Without doubt he was one and never stopped writing till the silent wings of time lifted him away.

When Ksemendra's great preceptor Sri Abhinav Gupta Passed away in about 1025 AD (approximately). His death must have left him stunned for a while. He took a long time to start writing. In fact it took him full twelve years to start writing. In 1037 AD he wrote his first work – 'Brihat Katha Manjiri'. What was the reason that stopped Ksemendra from writing for such a long time? Some plausible reasons could be. First, he was not mature enough to start writing; second, he was busy learning

under his Gurus Gangaka and Sompada. Third and importantly the last reason being that he wanted to attain a fair degree of experience and knowledge of the world about him, so critically essential to a writer like him. When he thought himself fully equipped then alone he ventured to write. This careful approach is his characteristic for he was full of integrity and nobility not only as a writer but also in public and private life. After all he firmly believed in propriety (औचित्य). In future he was earmarked by destiny to write such an important work as Auchitya Vichar Charcha which deals with propriety not confined only to poetry and literature but to the general life as well. How far removed from the values of the present time when things such as propriety and good values are readily and conviently consigned to the flames on the flimsy pretext of 'some unavoidable factors'.

The earliest works that Ksemendra wrote were of peculiar nature. He was perhaps not an admirer of huge works spanning over lakhs of verses or shlokas. He wanted a concise literature which could be read without taking much time. Perhaps he had a feel of future and knew the waning interest of the people to read huge works. From the sense of practicality he thought it prudent to embark upon the tough job of abridgement of voluminous works like Ramayana Mahabharata and 'Brihatkatha'.

First of all he started with 'Brihatkatha'. This work was actually written by Gunnadiya in Paisachi, a language of central India. According to Buhlar (Buhlar Report) and Lacote (in his 'Brihatkatha Shloka Samagraha' by Buddha Swamin,Ed by Lacote in Paris 1802-1829) Gunnadiya lived in Ist century A.D. Keith, Aiyanger, Fleet and Kane are of the view that he flourished in 4th century A.D. It is said that the original work comprised of 700,000 sholokas. Ksemendra reduced it to 7500 sholokas (Verses) in 'Brihatkatha Manjiri' i.e., one hundredth of the original. Somdeva in his abridged edition of Brihatkatha famous as Katha sarit Sagar' reduced it to 21000 verses. Ksemendra and Somdev added some stories of Panchtantra to their abridged works. 'Brihat katha' is about the exploits of Udhiyana, his conquests and lovesports. It

has stories about his son Narvahana. These stories are interesting. They are instructive thus didactic in content. The original Brihatkatha is lost. Ksemendra's work has retrieved some of it for future generations. It is important to note that Ksemendra's first effort at abridgement was not successful. It was more or less a vain effort. The work has not well received.

His second attempt was to abridge the Mahabharata. Now there is an interesting story behind his effort to abridge Mahabarata. It is said that when he started to abridge Mahabharata, Rsi Vyasa whom he held in highest esteem calling himself the 'slave of vyasa' (व्यासदास:) appeared to him in a dream. He asked Ksemendra not to abridge it unless Ksemendra satisfies him (Vyasa who is the compiler of the great epic Mahabharata) with his acumen to abridge literary works. It is said that Rsi Vyasa uttered a sentence in Sanskrit and asked him to shorten it in thirty two words without loosing its meaning. The sentence, it is said, was something like this "During a rainy night a bitch was standing outside a king's palace against an old hut. Being pregnant she gave birth to a pup. Soon the ramshackle hut caved in due to heavy rain and the bitch died under it". It is said that Ksemendra abridged it in twenty eight words only (an interesting legend !), Rsi Vyasa was satisfied and allowed his 'slave' (दास:) to proceed ahead with his project of abridgement of Mahabharata. Ksemendra named it 'Mahabhart' manjiri. Similarly he abridged Ramayana and called it'Ramayana manjiri'.

Hence the first phase of his literary effort was that of abridgement of huge classics. he failed with the first but succeeded with the other two. He was now noticed and emerged as a promising talent. But by and large it was not an outstanding first phase.

Afterwards Ksemendra gave us huge output of literary activity in which he wrote works on diverse subjects. These works are 'kavi-kanthabharan', 'Auchitya vicharcharcha', 'Darpdhalan', 'Suvrat tilak', 'Charu chariya', 'Samaymatrika', Kalavilas etc.

We shall discuss some of these works in detail and some

in a cursory way. To me humble opinion some works must be discussed in some detail because it willbe an injustice to the literary genius of Ksemendra to pass them over. We shall discuss in some detail 'kavi-kanthabharan', 'Auchityavichar charcha', 'Samaymatrika' and 'Dashavtar charita'. His minor works though not minor in import or their poetical merit but minor in the sense not being voluminous. We shall here discuss some of his minor works in brief.

a. Suvrat Tilak (सुवृत्ततिलक)

Suvrat tilak is an important work on meters (छंद शास्त्र). It is said that no work like it has been written in Sanskrit literature. In that way it is a classic. To quote from 'the minor works of Ksemendra', "Suvrat tilak occupies a unique place among the works on meters. In this work he has discussed for the first time the merits, flaws and proper usage of several meters. This task has been very well accomplished by him. He was a pioneer in this type of work without any followers till today". It represents an important milestone on meters that has not been crossed.

b. Chatur varga-Samgraha (चतुर्वसंग्रह)

To satisfy the inquiry of his disciples and of the learned people he wrote this work. The main aim of the work is to lay emphasis not on rennunciation but leading a balanced life. The work is divided into four parts viz : धर्मप्रशंसा, अर्थप्रशंसा, कामप्रशंसा, मोक्षप्रशंसा. The last chapter मोक्षप्रशंसा is extremely well written. The total verses in this book are one hundred and three.

c. Charuchariya (चारुचर्या)

This small work contains hundred verses. It asks us to uphold honesty and values. Importance of ethics is beautifully articulated. The book starts with an invocatory to Lord Vishnu. According to A.B. Keith (A History of Sanskrit literature) Jalhan another Kashmirian author got inspiration from 'Charuchariya' and wrote Mughdopdesh (मुग्धोपदेश).

d. Darpdalan (दर्पदलन)

This interesting work starts with an invocatory to Discrimination. It is an understandable departure from established custom of dedicating an invocatory to the God or any other related deity. But here it is not a curious happening. As a non-conformist and endowed with an incisive insight Ksemendra makes a departure from the established custom.

दर्प means pride or haughtiness. Ksemendra wants people to shun pride and remain humble. Humility is a virtue and too much pride in men eventually leads to their destruction. According to him the various causes of Pride are :

a. Pride due to one's ancestory or family (कुल)
b. Pride due to riches or wealth (वित्त)
c. Pride due to beauty (रूप)
d. Pride due to valour (शौर्य)
e. Pride due to charity or philanthropy (दान)
f. Pride due to penance (तप)
g. Pride due to fame (श्रुत)

The book testifies in ample measure the psycological insight of Ksemendra and is worth reading. It is a little classic indeed.

e. Lok Prakash (लोकप्रकाश)

This book is very interesting and historically important. For all times this book is valuable. Some scholars believe that Lokprakash does not belong to the fertile pen of Ksemendra. There are some persian words in it which cannot be attributed to the eleventh century. Prof. Buhlar thinks that it is of Ksemendra while as Pandit Madhusudan Kaul and Prof. Baver think otherwise. Lokprakash records detail of Trade transactions, Treasury receipts and Hundis etc.

f. Sav-Savakopdesh (सेव्यसेवकोपदेश)

This book again scripts the deep anxiety and sensitivity

Ksemendra has towards the society. He wants an ideal society where the powerful do not trample on the weak and where the employees and employer work in accordance with the Dharma (duty). In fact this work deals with the delicate relation between a master and his servant or between an employer and an employee. In every age we see this relationship under duress and surrounded in the murky haze of suspicion. This leads to uncertain understanding which affects the mutual trust between the two. It can snowball into heated arguments, sometimes into scuffles, dismissals and even in the death of one of them. Ksemendra exhorts the master to be like a benign guardian to the employee and also admonishes the servant or the employee to discharge his duties in the best interests of his master. According to the author the main cause of distrust between a master and the servant is greed. Ksemendra in another welcome departure dedicates the invocatory of this book to contentment (संतोष). It is highly commendable because of both the parties i.e., if the employer and the employee are guided by contentment then the master will part with some of his wealth and give it to his servants or employees making them happy. The employees on their part will work with more dedication and loyality. How practical and rational ! A view to distribute some of the wealth, sounds reasonable and humane.

g. Kalavilas (कलाविलास)

Kalavilas is another Ksemendra classic. A work that is unique in its contents. It amply portrays the versatillity of Ksemendra, his insight into the social setup. It contains ten chapters and has five hundred and fifty shlokas. The author has written the work with rare sarcasm and wit. Kalavilas depicts an amazing sense of character portrayal. A tribute to the ingenuity of Ksemendra. In a classic depiction of a thief or a cheat named Muldeva, the author unfolds before us the social problems of thieves and thugs. He wants to make people wary of their tricks. It is rarely seen in literature that a thief or a super cheat becomes hero of a work. Here in kalavilas the cheat Muldeva occupies the centre stage. It has a character like Muldeva for our benefit and for our inquiry.

Muldeva is a supercheat, a modern Natwar Lal. He is intelligent. He understands the weakness of the prevalent social order. He is fully aware of its loopholes. He is conversant with the credulity of the people. He is successful in exploiting all these weaknesses to the hilt and comes out successful every time, at the expense of his victims. Muldeva desires to pass on his incredible 'black art' to his son-chanderdeva. He instructs his son in all the features of his subtle secret art. Muldeva instructs him how to rob people He teaches Chanderdeva to disguise in the form of a medicant, a doctor, a singer, a hawker and sometimes a goldsmith. He impresses upon his son Chanderdeva a need to capitilise on people's weakness so that he is able to rob them repeatedly with impunity.

In Kalavilas Ksemendra discuses with rare clarity greediness in man, courtesans, office clerks, etc. Kalavilas is a mirror of his times and reflects the social system of his age.

These were some of his important minor works. Now we shall discuss a few of his major works like "Kavikanthabaran", "Dashavtar Charita", Samaymatrika, and Auchitricha Charcha. There are other works which have been written by him but as the main aim of the small book is to make the present generation aware of Ksemendra as a writer. We shall here discuss these works only as by and large they represent the broad sweep of his major works. Time and again I would like to emphasise that his minor works some of which we have discussed earlier in brief are not un-important in any way. In fact they are as important part of Indian or world literature as any other work. His Suvratilak, Darpdalan, Kalavilas, Charuchariya etc have rich historical and literary content.

His Major Works

a. Samaymatrika (समयमातृका)

Ksemendra has given to us some of the most valuable works which open a mine of information before our eyes. The information about social mores especially that of courtesans is given in graphic

detail in Samaymatrika. The title of the work is revealing in itself. 'Samay' means Time and 'matrika' (मातृका) means mothers. The 'mothers of the Time'. Ksemendra, infact employs the intense power of his wit in using 'Samaymatrika' as title of his work on courtesans. The sway they hold over the minds and bodies of the people is immense, so in a way they are 'the mothers of his time', for they rule the roost. They wield influence. They wield power. The people of different social strata be it a minister, a noble, an official, a trader, a common man or even a priest fall in her passionate snare. She, the overlording courtesan, destroys them slowly, weakening their morals and draining their wealth. Their homes are destroyed, their prestige is shattered and what is worse, the collective will of the nation gets weakened making it easy for enemies to move ahead with their sinister designs.

Samaymatrika is a highly readable and path breaking work in world literature. The depiciton of its chief character 'Kankali' (कंकाली) an old, wornout courtesan is scarcely seen elesewhere. Her exploits are worthy to take note of. She is now old. Her skin is freckled and loose revealing her skeletal frame. Now 'Kankali' is not beautiful and lithe as she once used to be. Time has played its eternal play on her. She has lost her fullness of youth and lustful gait. Her bones seek to come out of her skin. The blood vessels have made rills all over her body. She is now 'Kankali' (कंकाली). 'Kankal' (कंकाल) means a skeleton. That is what she is now physically. But she has not lost her experience. Her 'heroics' are with her. Her treasure and her past. The reality of human body, how so beautiful it may have been in its heyday is before us in stark truth. Though of no use now physically, she is a treasure-trove of experience, she instructs her disciple 'kalavati', who is a ravishingly beautiful courtesan in the arts of seduction. 'Kankali' tells her about her own campaigns in which she disarmed men of all hues. She reveals to her the finer secrets of the trade. Kankali is a very strong character, worth reading and understanding but undoubtedly not worth emulating. What an irony fate throws upon us and binds us in unseen chains of uncertainty.

Ksemndra wrote samaymatrika in the year 1050 AD. The book is divided into eight chapters and contains six hundred thirty five

verses. He has a motive behind writing samaymatrika. He wants to convey the evil influence that a courtesan can have on one's life. He wants to ensure that the wealth and morals of men are saved for the larger good of the society and the state.

Selections from Samaymatrika

As discussed earlier samaymatrika is about courtesans, and how they succeed in demolishing men of all character, status and shades. The reason behind their destruction is naked lust, which makes them slaves of their own bodies. They want to have new carnal experiences which can not be met within the limitations of the institution of marriage. Thus they furtively come out either in the day or in the night to seek the means to satiate their overpowering lecherous thirst. Whether it is love or lust may be a point of debate or dispute. One thing is certain they fall prey to passion (Kama). The presiding lord of passion is 'kamadeva' – the cupid ever ready with his 'soft' weapons.

Ksemendra begins with an invocatory to Kamadeva. He says:

अनङ्गवातालास्त्रेण जिता येन जगत्रयी।
विचित्रश्क्तये तस्मै नमः कुसुमधन्ववे।।

'Without Form, weapons invisible like the wind, triumphing over the three worlds. I offer my salutations to Kamadeva'.

This invocation is beautiful in its structure. It has short words but it is powerful in expression. In war when two opposing commanders are arrayed against each other, they use their lethel weapons to overpower the other. Despite their lethal weapons, these men in arms locked in mortal combat are not sure about the outcome. On the contrary Kamadeva (cupid) who is not even visible and whose bows and arrows are made of only soft flowers has no delusion about victory. He triumphs over the three worlds with his soft weapons without fail.

यस्या दुर्धरघोरवक्त्रकुहरे विक्षये लक्ष्यते
क्षुब्धाब्धाविव लोलबालशफरी कुत्रापि लोकत्रयी।
तामज्ञातविशाल कालकलनां तैस्तैः पुराणैरपि।
प्रौढ़ा देहिसमुहमोहनमयीं काली करालां नुमः।।

"At the time of delusion the whole world will end. The three worlds (लोकत्रयी) with three fold gunas, (causes) etc. will cease to be. This vast trinity will be seen lost in the angry ocean of the deluge like a fingerling (little fish). I salute to the great energy of delusion (महाकाली) which has power to engulf even the border less Mahakala. We all offer obeisance to this super energy. It draws a veil on the true nature of Atman and thus creates the sensation of joy, sorrow and passion in us. Hence we fail to recognise the true nature of ourself".

Here Ksemendra conveys to us the innate weakness of human being. When caught in the seemingly splendid snare of a sensuous courtesan, man loses his mind and his reason.

Thus the chances of his happiness in his life becomes dim. In this verse Ksemndra underlays two important things.

a. The nature of this world is beyond the control of its creation.

b. Man can know his real self if he is able to lift the veil that surrounds his true nature.

c. Man will destroy himself if he falls in the snare of passion (though this meaning is indrectly implied).

Another important element in his writings is the quality of comparisions – similies etc. Though they are not at par with Kalidasa or Bhavabhuti nonetheless they present a panoramic picture aptly and forcefully.

3. Discription of Srinagar

अस्ति स्वस्तिमां विलासवसतिः संभोगभङ्गीभुवः
केलि प्राङ्गणमङ्गनाकुलगुरोर्देवस्य श्रृङ्गारिणः
कश्मीरेषु पुरं परं प्रवरतालब्धाभिद्याविश्रुतं
सौभाग्याभरणं महीवरतनोः संकेतसद्मोश्रियः॥

"In the land of Kashmir there is a beautiful city named Pravarpur (modern Srinagar). This city is as beautiful as Kashmir itself. This city is the playground of the rich and the noble (present day-Las-Vegas). It is the play field of kama-deva who is the natural

guardian of damsels. It is the ornament of good luck for the world. It is the place of sport of the Goddess of wealth – Laxmi".

Here we see a beautiful picture depiction. Indirectly he tells us about the splendor of the city of Srinagar in his time.

4. The discription of the beautiful courtesan Kalavati.

कुचयोः कठिनत्वेन कुटिलत्वेन या भ्रुवेः।
नेत्रयोः श्यामलत्वेन वेश्यावृतमदर्शयत्।।

"Kalavati the beautiful courtesan engages in her amorous trade through the solidity of her breasts. She does it through the torturous motion of her brows. She does it through the depth of her dark eyes. Through her sensuous body language it becomes evident that she is a super seducing courtesan".

It is amazing that even one thousand years after, this discription of a courtesan is as faithful to the original as could be possible. It seems as if Kalavati has been preserved by Ksemendra in versified form. She has become immortal. There is virtually no difference between mannerisms of Kalavati and a modern call girl. It seems that sensuality and passion are set to defeat even the ravages of the time.

Kalavati has lost her caretaker, who was also her maternal grandmother. A wrong medical prescription resulted in her death. Kalavati has become orphaned. Her caretaker, her guardian was no doubt old yet she was wise in the matters of her trade. She kept men of low or evil intentions away from Kalavati. She kept a record of her activities. She increased Kalavati's customer reach in the nobility and royality. Now, as she is dead, Kalavati is in somebre mood. The depiction of her sombre mood by Ksemendra as seen by a friendly barber (नापित) is worth reading.

ध्यानालभ्वनमाननं करतले व्यालभ्बमानालकं
लुप्तव्यञ्जनमञ्जनमं नयनयोर्निः श्रासतान्तोऽधरः।
मौनल्कीबनिलीन केलिविहंग निद्रायमाणं गृहे (?)
वेषः प्रोषितयोपितां समुचितः कस्मादकस्मात्तव।।

"Why are you in despair, with untidy hair, head placed in the palms ? Why collyrium has been swept away from your eyes ? Why your full lusty lips have gone dry. Why you are without song and play, thou bird of amourous sport, of fun and of frolic. Why you have turned gloomy like those, whose husbands are in distant lands".

Ksemendra uses a poetical device called transferred epithet while describing the trade of Kalavati.

The usage of the word केलिविहंग (Bird of passion and amour) is a tribute to Ksemendra's poetical prowess. The barber finally helps Kalavati to come under the tutelage of Kankali who is the ultimate courtesan. Kankali is old, infirm and frail. But she is vastly experienced. She has travelled far and wide. She is a vast repository of sensuous knowledge. She teaches young kalavati, the art of seduction. She narrates her own exploits which are incredible and bold. Her forays and raids into the morals of men of all hues and strata are legendary. It makes her the supreme mistress of sensuality.

Kavi-Kanthabaran

Ksemendra was out and out a poet. Kalhana the chronicler does not think highly of his historical work 'Nripavali' but admits in the same vein that this work is definitely of a poet. Ksemendra was a poet of many hues and moods. He had studied almost every branch of literature available to him. He wanted to contribute towards the poetry in a different and unique way. Thus he wrote kavi kanthabaran – the 'necklace of the poets'.

It was written during the time of king Ananta Dev of Kashmir, between 1028 to 1033 AD, Ksemendra's value is unique because in almost all his available works he writes about the period in which he wrote the work, even the name of the king who ruled at that time is also given in the colophon of the work. He makes researchers happy and who have time and again thanked him for his contribution. On the contrary many poets, and authors have maintained a stubborn silence about their time making their period a victim of fertile imagination.

Kavi-Kanthabharan was written for aspiring poets as well as

for his disciples. It is divided into five parts. The first chapter deals with the attainment of the poetic craft and its fine tunining. How this craft can be 'apprehended' is discussed. It is emphasised that one should undertake 'Japa' of the Goddess of learning by trying to write and by exerting. The aspiring writer or poet should first construct seemingly meaningless verses on which he will improve upon till he attains some level of maturity. The poet should be careful about his food, living style, range of his reading etc. He must observe things by visiting different places. This is discussed in the second chapter. These activities according to him will provide enough experience. In the third chapter, Ksemendra asks the poets and writers to create wonder in their works. If the element of wonderment is not created then the writing is meaningless. In the fourth chapter Ksemendra discusses the errors and flaws in literary writing or poetry. According to him flaws in literary writing or poetry are made due to the immature use of words called शब्दसदोषता or say 'flaw of words'. If there are flaws made in meaning or say, not being able to express or convey, which is lack of expression in a work (अर्थसदोषता). This is the second flaw. The third flaw is made in the element of the sentiment. If a literary work does not reflect or possess the element of sentiment (रस) before the reader then this work is not a good one. This flaw is called 'lack of sentiment or lack of relish' (रससदोषता).

In the end Ksemendra wishes well to a learned and hardworking poet who alone can flourish in a learned society. Here Ksemendra has an important point for us. We have to take note of it. Without a learned society a poet of even high merit is of no value. His works or poetry will not be appreciated. Hence it is essential that a poet howsoever great he may be cannot live or flourish in isolation. His base and his canvas is the society he lives in. If the society is learned the poet will flourish as he will have to constantly upgrade his craft and hone his talent.

Ksemendra delineates an important point in his kavi-kanthabharan. The study of this work suggests that even though poetry is a natural gift a poet can always polish his craft to a great extent making himself a master artist. The first chapter of the work labours

to explain that even though a person may possess a natural talent he has to improve upon it. We can say in other words that the natural talent and art has to be married to poetic craft, then alone the result will be endearing, lasting and beautiful.

Selections from Kavi-Kanthabharan

Before Ksemendra, Rajasekhar a noted authority on poetics wrote a work on the lines of kavi-kanthabharan. This work is known as 'kavyamimansa'. It is considered a milestone on poetics. Rajasekhara flourished around 900 A.D. There are cardinal points of difference between the two. Rajasekhar is an elaborate writer who believes in lengthy explanation, supposition and discussion. On the other hand, Ksemendra is the master of brevity. He puts forth his viewpoint very effectively in a few verses. Without wasting time to create a persepective he straightaway comes to the point that he wants to emphasise. It is a peculiar quality of his writings.

Selections

1. The following verse gives a unqiue discription of Saraswati – The Goddess of learning.

श्वतीं सरस्वतीं मूर्धिन चन्द्रमण्डलमध्यगाम्।
अक्षराभरणां ध्यायेद् वाङमयामृतवर्षिणीम्।।

'White and Radiant, seated inside the halo of the moon, impershible, wearing the ornaments of letters, showering the nectar of the knowledge — Saraswati is to be mediated in our mind'.

Saraswati has been depicted as white (श्वेता). Here white denotes the purity of the knowledge. She is the embodiment of the pure knowledge. Ksemendra uses a beautiful construction or ornamentation (अलंकार) i.e the अक्षराभरणां the 'ornament of letters. As she is the presiding Goddess of the knowledge, 'ornament of letters' is an apt discription of her nature which is nothing but pure knowledge. Knowledge cannot be gained without knowing letters. (अक्षर:) spirtual knowledge is also gained after meditating upon seed letters (बीजाक्षर:) like ऐं, ह्रीं, कलीम् सौः etc. Hence use of 'ornament of letters' here

has two fold meaning, one to master the language and literature and the other to know the world of the Mantras through seed letters through which a devotee seeks liberation (मोक्ष:)

2. Seed letters and the poet

काव्यक्रियेच्छाङ्करमूलभूमिमन्विष्य विश्रान्तिलवेन मोक्षः।
अन्यावधाने मदनस्य मोक्षस्तृतीयबीजे सकलेऽस्ति मोक्षः।।

"When the poet meditates upon the primal desire (knowledge) and applies his all mental powers to it (i.e., on the seed letter Aim, ऐं) his speech and language (वाणी) becomes librated. When the poet meditates upon the second seed letter (क्लीं, kleem) his passion gets librated. When he meditates on the third seed letter सौ (Sauh) he attains liberation and bliss. These three seed letters ऐं, क्लीं and सौः represent the creative energies of Shakti. For a successful poet meditating upon them is paramount. If a poet does not meditate upon his creative energies, if he does not hone and channel his craft he will not attain the powers of a creative literary person."

3. How a poet sharpens his powers of observation

गीतेषु गाथास्वथ देशभाषाकाव्येषु दद्यात् सरसेषु कर्णम्।
वाचां चमत्काराविधयिनीनां नवार्थच चसिु रुचिं विदध्यात्।।

"A poet (or a person who wants to express through verse or prose) should not remain idle, but study folk literature, and dialects. He must know other local languages and be conversant with their literature. He must attend debates, seminars. He should frequently go to watch theatre. In theatre he will learn the relation between the spoken word and its physical expression, through physical gestures (acting)."

Here Ksemendra lays bare before an aspiring poet the secrets of becoming a good poet. It shows that he was very meticulous in his knowledge and wants his disciples to engage in keen observation. This according to him are keys to a good literary endevour, natural talent apart.

4. वृतपूरणमुद्योगः पाठः परकृतस्य च।
काव्यांगाविधाधिगमः समस्यापरिपूरणम्।।

"A poet should work hard. He should study the compositions of the other poets. He should attain proficiency in different branches of knowledge. In this way he will surmount obstacles".

Before Ksemendra his illustrious predecessors like Rajasekhar and Bamaha have also subscribed to this view. According to them without a thorough knowledge of different forms of literature a poet cannot attain perfection or a fair degree of mastery. Perfection being an ideal state is very rare and difficult to attain. According to vamana, a poet should have studied grammar, metre, erotica or ethics of governance.In this way Ksemendra lays before us a historical perespective of the evolution of the theory of poetics in brief and effective way.

5. नाटकाभिनयप्रेक्षा श्रृंगारालिंगिता मतिः।
कवीनां संभवे दानं गीतेनात्माधिवासनम्।।

" The aspiring poet should attend theatrical presentation. They should watch plays. They should develop artistic tastes. They should help other artists in every possible way. They should learn music and feast on it, thereby soothing their mind and soul".

Ksemendra gives pyschological tips to the poets. As a poet is supposed to create art, he is expected to have an allround development of his mental faculities in the elements of the subtle world. Ksemendra desires to make a near complete poet who is open to new ideas. A poet who has done extensive ground work. Thus Ksemendra like a true teacher helps a literary person obtain finesse in his creative effort.

6. Discription of the valour of Abhimanyu from his work Sashivamsha (Cant. 5, Verse 4.4, Kavikanthabharan)

भोजैर्भज्ञिनभीरुभिर्विलुलितं व्यामीलितं मालवै
र्मद्रैर्विद्रुतमेव यातमसकृत् मार्गादधो मागधैः।
वङ्गानामभिमन्युकङ्कणरवैर्व्राते पुरः सूचिते
मीनैः संकुचितं परस्परधृतैर्नीरन्ध्रमन्ध्रै स्थिम्।।

"Upon hearing the furious sound of the rings of metal worn by Abhimanyu the brave troops of Boja were scattered. The forces of Malwa fled. Madra armies took to their heels. Countless warriors were repulsed. The troops of Meena country started withdrawing. Andhra forces took leave and melted away."

Here the preponderant theme of the verse is to "runaway". This is described in different words. When we see or feel its sum total effect then the picture of the valour of Abhimanyu starts to form in our mind. Finally we are filled with wonderment of the sentiment of valour or Vir Rasa (वीररस). It is to be noted here that when such verses are translated or rendered into English or any other language for that matter, they loose their original flavour, more so when such verses are in the Sanskrit. The prime reason being the quality of expression in Sanskrit is superb and full of wonder. It is not wholly possible to render them into English. The other reason being the capability of the translator. Here I find myself in a precarious situation given my limited experience and ability.

7. Discription of Trees in Ashrams.

This verse is taken from 'Kankajaniki'. This work is lost. But like 'Shishivamsha' Ksemendra has quoted this verse from 'kanajaniki' in kavikathabharan to place an example of good writing before his disciples. In this way we get some knowledge about the nature of his works which are not extant now.

जम्बूबिम्बकदम्बनिम्बबकुलप्लाक्षक्षभल्लातक
द्राक्षाकिंशुककर्णिकारकदलीजम्बीरकोदुम्बरैः
सा सन्तानकबिल्वतिल्वतिलक श्लेष्मातकारग्वध
न्यग्रोधार्जुनशातनासनवनश्यामान् ददर्शाश्रिमान्।।

"Rose apple, betel, Neulea, lemon, mimusops, baniyan, semicarpus anarcadium, grapes, butea, banana, wild basil, ficus, woodapple, cassia, lisoda, ultantus, mimosa, kaner and other trees were in the Ashrams make them dusky with shade".

Ksemendra lists the trees in the ashram used for shade and other things in Ashram like for flowers, for wood and even for fodder for cattle. Here the writer passes this information about the different

trees to future generations. In this verse he assumes the role of a texonomist. It is a pity that now we are so removed from the natural scene that we have lost the capacity to admire it in all its shades and colours. The natural scene is otherwise central and highly helpful to the evolution of the poet in the man. It is indeed a sad state of our sensibilities, so lamentable and so deplorable especially when we claim to be progressive, learned, librated and even sensitive.

Kavikanthabharan is a work that reflects the views of Ksemendra about poets, writers and their craft. When we read this work we are lifted to a high state of joy and delight. It is highly recommended to all people who engage themselves in art or literature. It is refreshingly fresh and ever modern.

Dash-Avtar-Charita (दशावतारचरित)

The Indian literary tradition needs to be understood in its totality and with an unbiased understanding. Some people have floated an untenable idea that there was a greater tradition and a lesser tradition in India. Greater tradition incorporated writings of well to do or rather dominant groups of the society like people belonging to upper casts etc. Then there was a lesser tradition in which the exploited or marginalised sections of the society wrote. A deliberate attempt is being made to show that there was a vertical split in the literary writings in India. Which emphatically speaking is not so. An indepth understanding and research into the literary writings in India proves beyond any shred of doubt that the literary output and effort in India was wholesome and not fragmentary. It was completely syncretic in nature. People of all shades and status contributed to its evolution and upheld its central nature. What I am trying to point out is that it was of assimilative character. Dush-Avtar-Charita of Ksemendra is a part of that assimilative quality of Indian literary tradition which is not based on rejection but assimilation. When Buddha came on Indian scene, his sermous and teaching stirred the hearts of the multitude. People started listening to him. His influence grew larger and larger. Ultimately he become a part of Indian consciousness. He was hailed as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu. This is the assimilation character of Indian way of life. This assimilative

quality inspired Ksemendra to write important work on Buddhism named 'Baud-Avdan-Kalaplata'. Ksemendra pays glowing tribute to Buddha despite he himself being a vashnavite. Dush-Avtar-Charita is perhaps the last work of Ksemendra. He had retired to the holy region of Tripuresh (modren Harvan area). It was at Tripuresh that he finished this work in 1066A.D. This work again proves the independent capacity of his mind. It also proves that Buddhism was held in high esteem even during his time, when it had considerably declined from the exalted position it held in the time of Kanishka or afterwards. It still was an important component of the colourful cultural canvas of Kashmir.

Dush-Avtar-Charita depicts in details the ten incarnations of Vishnu viz. Matyasa Avtar, Kurma Avtar, Varha Avtar, Narsimha Avtar, Vamana Avtar, Purshuram Avtar, Rama Avtar, Krishna Avtar and Kakraya or Kali Avtar.Of these the last incarnation is yet to occur. All these incarnations are graphically detailed. Ksemendra is full of devotion when he writes about them. The discription is full of beautiful sentences and metaphors. It is highly interesting and revealing to read. This work presents before us the devotional streak in Ksemendra.

Dush-Avtar-Charita has ten chapters. Each chapter describes an incarnation of the Lord. Before the start of the chapter, the author involves the blessings of the Lord in the form of that particular incarnation. Each invocatory tells us about the purpose of the particular incarnation. Thus the invocation performs a two fold purpose, one of invoking the blessings and the other of presenting us with the purpose of the particular incarnation. The purpose is to destroy the evil to establish the rule of Dharma and to protect the weak.

Selection From Dash-Avtar-Charita

1. The invocation to Ist chapter

अशेषविश्ववैचित्र्यरचनारुचये नमः।
मायागहनगूढाय नानारूपाय विष्णवे।। (verse 1, Canto 1)

"Hiding himself under the veil of Maya (illusion). Engaging himself in the creation of the universe. I bow to the Lord Vishnu".

2. स्वजनस्थितिरिवत्रस्य पुण्यारण्यविहारिणः।
हरिभक्तिरसासिक्ताः श्रूयन्तां मम सूक्तिया।। (verse 14, Canto1)

"Listen to my verses which are full of the sentiment of devotion to the Lord, whose heart turns sad upon seeing the pitiable conditions of his devotees despite enjoying in the Heaven."

3. संतोषो यदि किं धानै सुखशतैः किं यद्यनायत्तता
वैराग्यं यदि किं व्रतेः किमखिलैस्त्यागैर्विवेको यदि।
सत्सड.गे यदि किम् दिगन्तगमनप्रस्थानतीर्थ श्रमैः
श्रीकान्ते यदि भक्तिरप्रतिहता तर्तिक समाधिक्रमैः।।
(verse 15, Canto1)

"If there is contentment then why the \craving for riches. If there is inertia then why to pursue different forms of enjoyments. If there is detachment why to have fasts and do austerities. If there is discrimination then why to engage in alms giving. If there is the company of goodmen then why to embark upon ardous piligrimages. If there is faith in Lord Vishnu (who is the object of love and worshipped by Laxmi) then why to do yogic practices."

This verses embodies the futility of human exercise to attain the supreme without doing the real action(Karma). Man does not understand that God does not only reside in temples or pilgrimages but also in the demeanor of the noble men. He has to be realised not through religious practices but through detachment. Ksemendra gives more importance to unflinching devotion than to yogic practices and Sadhana.

4. विष्णोर्जगन्निवासस्य नैव द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रिगः।
दोषे वैरं गुणे प्रीतिर्निसर्गैण जगद्गुरो।। (verse 37, Canto 4)

"Lord Vishnu has neither attachment for anybody nor enmity against anyone. He is only the foe of the evil ways and friends of the noble qualities."

Ksemendra has a message for us in this verse. This verse is taken from Narshimavtar chapter. Narshimha is the fourth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Narsimha, the head and torso of a lion and limbs of a human came to the world as forth incarnation of the Lord, to kill the wicked demon 'Hirnakashpa'. His son Prahlada, was an ardent devotee of the Lord. To save a demon child devotee and to get rid of the excesses perpeterated by the cruel Hirnakashyap, he assumes the form of Narsimha. The wicked demon is killed by him. The point here worth noting is that to God all his creation is equal irrespective of creed, colour, race or caste. What makes someone wicked or noble is the kind of action he indulges in. As Prahlada is a great devotee of the Lord, he needed protection despite being born as the son of a cruel demon king. Prahlada is a symbol of hope of positive powers in the world. He is worth adulation and admiration. Ksemendra praises the fortitude and steadfastness of this noble demon-child who despite all odds loaded against him comes out victorious in virtue and faith.

The Ramavtar characterisation of Ksemendra is superb. He has succeeded in striking a balance between the character depiction of a villainous Ravana and a heroic but gentle Rama. The portrayal of the good and evil behind a backdrop of unrecorded and unacclaimed sacrifices, both on mental and physical plane like that of Urmila, the wife of Laxmana or the unflinching devotion of Bharata towards his elder brother Rama has been highly realistic.

5. Notice Rama's lament for his wife Sita

हत्वा स मारीचमयमेयमायं त्यक्त्वाश्रमं लक्ष्मणमाप्तमग्रे।
विलौक्य सीताहरणाभिशङ्की ध्यात्वापतत्तन्मुखदत्तदृष्िट:।। (verse 158, Canto 7)

"Rama after leaving the Ashram slayed Marich the master of phantasm. But when he saw the brave Lxmana before him, his suspicion about the possible abduction of Sita grew in his heart.Remembering the face of his wife Sita through the eyes of Laxmana (who had just left her alone in the hut) he fell down in a swoon."

Here Rama is shown as a husband having infinite love for his wife. The mere suspicion that something untoward might have happened to her leaves him in a state of melancholy. It is a good example of affection of a husband towards his wife.

6. See the plight of mighty Ravana on the death of his warrior son Inderjeet.

श्रुत्वैतदुग्राशनिपाततुल्यं शोकेन निर्भिन्नधृतिर्दशास्यः
व्याप्तः स्फुटदिभः कटाकाग्ररत्नैः पपात कल्पान्त इवाचलेन्द्रः
(verse 246, Canto7)

"Hearing this news, which was like a stroke of lightening to him, Ravana lost his resolve. When the thread breaks, the gems in the necklace are scattered, so was he. His state was same as shall be of the mighty and grand Sumeru mountain laden with gems when the waters of the deluge will cut its sides and its gems will fall apart."

In this verse the might and grandeur of Ravana is shown when compared to Sumeru mountain. He is smitten with grief over the death of his chief warrior and his loyal son — Inderjeet. Ravana's splendor is waning. who can resist the death of his son. The dipiction of the loss of Ravana's senses as well as his composure are piongnantly put to words by the author.

7. Notice Ravana's pitiable condition

भ्रात्रा भुजेन सकलोधमदक्षिणेन
पुत्रेण सर्वगुणमंगमवल्लभेन।
मानेन मौलिमणिना रहितस्य जन्तोः
किं जीवितेन शितशल्य शताचियि तेन।। (verse 248, Canto 7)

"Without a brother like Kumbhakarana who was a right hand to him, capable to do all things for him. Bereft of a doubtful and devoted son (Inderjeet). Without honour now. Of what use are hunderds of sharp arrows. They are now only a source of pain. What is the use of such life as he is in now."

The pitiable state of Ravana is described in short powerful

words. Ravana feels completely overwhelmed. When you are at war and you have nobody loyal by your side, your lethal weapons are of no use. They are a source of pain, for those valourous warriors who would wield them have already been laid low. The sight of weapons without warriors is a body blow to a king at war.

8. Gopis describing Krishna as their tormentor

अन्तर्लोचनयोर्विशत्यविरतं लग्नश्च पाणौ गतिं
निर्बन्धने रूणद्धि धावित मुहुर्दशाभिकामोऽधरे।
सख्यः किं करवाणि वारणशतैर्नैवापयति क्षणं
कृष्णः षट्चरणः प्रयाति चपला पुष्पोच्चये विध्नताम।। (Verse 75, Canto 8)

Krishna's divine play with Gopis has been subject of numerous art themes. It has been described in poetry, prose, paintings and sculpture the world over. Various dance form depict Krishna themes. Ksemendra's discription has its own charm. The above verses will amply convey his perspicacity as a top notch poet.

A Gopi says to her friend, "He is always in my eyes. he does not take leave. He catches my hands and would not let them go. Then he conspires to bite me and rushes to my lips. Friend, what shall I do? I try to stop him a hundered times but he does not budge even an inch. This way this naughty black bee (Krishna) has come in my way and does not let me pluck flowers."

Upon this the second Gopi adds.

कर्षत्यंशुकपल्लवं परिहृतः प्रत्याहितं नोज्झति
प्रक्षिप्तपूचरणे लगत्यविरतं तिष्ठत्यदृश्यः पथि
अङ्गान्युल्लिखति प्रसध यदि वा लब्धावकाशः क्वचि-
त्किं शोरिर्धन कुञ्जवञ्जुललताजालान्तरे कण्टक (Verse 76, Canto 8)

"Whenever he finds a chance he pulls at the hem of my garment. He pulls it and does not release it. I move a step ahead and he obstructs my path. Sometimes he is lurking on the way. He pricks my parts. How is the Krishna? A thorn amidst slender creepers (gopis)."

These verses describe the intimate conversation between Gopis. They are agast over the pranks played by the naughty Krishna. Despite their anger there is an under current of surging love for Krishna in their tender hearts. The poetic imagination of Ksemendra come to fore with its powerful portrayal.

Some verses from Buddhavtar charita

Ksemendra was influenced by the kindness and nobility of the ninth incarnation Lord Gutam Buddha. Here are a few verses of Buddha as a preceptor as described in Dush avtar charita.

आशापाशनिवेशबन्धनपृथुग्रन्थिव्यथार्विजत
स्तृष्णातापनिवृतिशीतलतनुर्मानावमानोज्झितः।
रागद्वेषविषप्रशान्ति सुखितश्चिन्ताविहीने वने
पाषाणे धनदर्भसूचिनिचिते शेते सुखं निर्वृतः।। (Verse 66, Canto 9)

"Free from the snare of expectation; librated from the limited knowldege of thick volumes; released from the pain of greed, self pride and unaffected by affront or insult; emancipated from the poision of attachment or aversion; Gratified with the contentment of renunciation; such a person sleeps with peace and ease even on the needle sharp pebbles of a forest."

12. शय्यास्तास्तनुतूलपेशलताः सा हेमहर्म्यर्थस्थिति
स्ताः केयूरकिरीट हाररचनास्ते कुञ्जरास्ते हयाः।
भोगास्तेऽभिमता न कस्य सुखदाः किंत्वक्षिपक्ष्माञ्जल
च्छेदे सर्वमनन्त्य (गण्य) मन्यवशगं दृश्यं न किंचित्कवचित।।
(verse 78, Canto9)

"Beds made of the finest of cotton. Those houses with golden gates. Those crowns, earings and bracelets. Elephants and steed for ride. Sources of enjoyment and luxury. Whom, they do not give joy? But in no time they get perished leaving behind not even a trace."

The last incarnation of Lord Vishnu called 'Kali avtar' or 'Kakarya avtar' is yet to happen. Ksemendra gives an indication of the times when such an incarnation will come on the earth and deliver

it from the burden of the evil.

Circumstances that will determine Kaliavtar's coming to the earth as 10th incarnation.

13. अक्षात्रिया क्षितिः सर्वा क्षत्रसंज्ञाः क्षितीश्वराः।
ये रक्षितारः पौराणां ते प्राण धनहारिणः।। (Verse 9, Canto 10)

The Earth has become bereft of warriors. The king is not valorous. Those who are designated to defend the citizens have taken to rob them.

14. मन्त्रिसेनापतिद्वाः स्थासभापति पुरोहितैः।
उत्कोचद्रविणोत्तानपाणिभिः क्षपिताः प्रजा।। (Verse 14, Canto 10)

"The minister, security chief, chief of the court and the priest, all have hands thrust forward to accept bribes. They have reduced the common man to pennury."

15. ब्रह्मचर्यमतिक्रान्तं गृहिणो वेश्ययोषितः
वानप्रस्थतिर्नास्ति यतीनां संयतिः कुतः (verse 24, Cants 10)

"Few people remain celibate. men already married frequent prostitution centers. To retire to the forest and secluded places has become out of date. Under such conditions the chances to find hermits and seekers in contemplation are grim ."

There all conditions are remniscent of a decadent society. Such world needs deliverance from decadence. Hence there is a strong urge in the well meaning citizenry to redeem the world from the clutches of the evil. Such hope materilises into an incarnation in the hope of such sacred redemption.

16. दरतुरुषकयवनान (फ) गानशकनन्दनैः
संकोचमेष्यति मही कुष्ठैरिव विसर्पिभिः (verse 34, Canto 10)

"Marching Turks, Greeks, Afghans and Sakas shall overwhelm the directions like a leprous infection. The whole world will become closed."

This verse is very important from a contemporanous point of view. Turks, Greeks, Afghans etc have hurled great injuries to the Indian psyche. They have come, raided and looted, indulged in arson, rape and mass murder. They pillaged temples, viharas, seats of learning, pieces of art and literature. In a way they represent a closed mentallity. This closed mindset is now before us in its new form of fundamentalism. Every day scores of innocent men are killed and whole indigenous communities are thrown out of their land in the name of holy jehad. In Ksemendra's time the raids of Mahmud Gaznavi left a deep scar on all sensitive men. Ksemendra gives a graphic discription of the society which needs deliverance from such an evil. He aspires and longs for an open, peaceful and progressive world where people of all beliefs live in amity and harmony.

Auchitvichar Charcha (औचित्यविचारचर्चा)

Finally we shall discuss in some detail Ksemendra's greatest work 'Auchit-Vichar-Charcha'. Perhaps this work is the last word on his writings, which are spread over a broad spectrum.

A psycological analysis of his works reveals a deep sense of pain and anguish simmering in his heart. He is torn apart by the social and political conditions of his time. He takes his pen, wields it like a sword to cut through the rot that has set in. He passionately wants men to be lofty in character, and stead-fast in devotion. He wants, honest, upright men. He dreams of a just and equitable system. He sees the root cause of all ills due to the absence of propriety (औचित्य). Here properiety is used as a literary principle. But propriety has widespread connotations. Property is a poetic embellishment (काव्यालंकार) which provides power of pertinency to a poetic work. But as said earlier, that apart from being a literary principle, it is relevent in all activities of human life.

The importance of propriety in literature has been upheld from very early times in India. Bharat Muni, while listing the essential qualities of a literary work has not directly dwelt upon the principle of propriety. In some of his works he has indirectly given importance to it. Every rhetorician after him has in one way or the other accepted

the importance of propriety (औचित्य). Eventually it was Ksemendra who put the principle of propriety on the high pedestal of prominence. The reasons behind it are not difficult to surmise eg.

1. The evolution of poetics was still taking shape before him, though it had progressed a great deal.

2. The social and political conditions which dictate the onward march of literature were perhaps not so conducive in its articulation before Ksemendra.

3. Ksemendra, who so intensely wanted to reform the general life of the people was the best person to propound the principle of properiety forcefully.

4. The Socio-political conditions of his time inspired him to promote the principle of propriety as an important principle of poetics ,literature, as well as a principle of human life .

It is worth mentioning that after the principle of propriety no singular contribution of such standard has been noticed in Indian literature. The biggest reason perhaps was that India was made to suffer on account of foreign incursions which left no time for deep contemplative study or inquiry. Though this is also a fact that despite reverses that India suffered the learning tradition was kept alive and many important works were written after him.It is also true that no new principle of poetics was propounded henceforth.

Some Selections from Auchit-Vichar-Charcha (औचित्यविचारचर्चा)

1. काव्यस्यालमलङ्कारै किं मिथ्यागणितैर्गुणैः।
   यस्य जीवितमौचित्यं विचिन्त्यापि न दृश्यते।। (Verse 4)

"If after inquiry the element of propriety is missing in a poetic work then all the ornamentations (अलंकार or figures of speech) used in that work howsoever good they be are worthless."

2. Proper use of the propriety of meaning (अर्थौचित्य)

मग्नानि द्विषतां कुलानि समरे त्वत्खडगधाराकुले
नाथास्मिन्निति वन्दिवाचि बहुशो देव श्रुतायां पुरा।
मुग्धा गुर्जरभमिपालमहिषी प्रत्याश्या पाथस:
कान्तारे चकिता विमुञ्चति मुहुः पत्युः कृपाणे दृशो। (Vese 12)

"Oh my lord, through the current of water produced by your sword, legions after legions of the enemy were drowned. I came to know about this from elder men. After uttering these words the simple queen of Gurjara King looks with hope towards the sword of her husband, believing that in the wilderness of the forest the sword would produce water enabling her to satiate the torment of thirst!"

Explanation

In this verse the stress is on the simplicity of the queen or rather upon her credulity or ignorance. She had heard that the sword of her husband created powerful currents (obviously of water) in which the enemy were drowned. The simple queen had not understood the hidden or suggestive meaning of the word 'current'. Actually it means that the king was so skillful in using the sword that he slayed countless enemy soliders. So much blood flowed that it looked like a river in which enermy was drowned. The simple queen instead thought that the sword actually produced water. Believing so, she hoped that in the wilderness of the forest where she along with her husband had gone on a hunting expedition, the sword would be capable of producing water, thereby quenching their thirst.

The use of मुग्धा (simpleton or ignorant) creates elements of propriety in this verse which lies in the hope of the queen that her husband's sword would create water helping them to quench their thirst. Had the queen not been simple or ignorant she would have understood the real meaning of the word 'current', and the whole scheme of the verse would have fallen flat rendering it absurd. The use of the word मुग्धा creates the 'propriety of the meaning called अथौचित्य. Ksemendra quotes the verse belonging to an earlier poet named Parimal to explain the meaning of Arthauchitya (अथौचित्य)

Improper use of the propriety of word meaning

3. In this example we shall see the improper use of the word which creates impropriety. Instead of sentiment (रस) it creates distaste.

This verse quoted by Ksemendra is of a famous writer Dharmakirti.

लावण्यद्रविणव्ययो न गण्तिः क्लेशो महान्स्वीकृतः
स्वच्छन्दस्य सुखं जनस्य वसतिश्चन्ताज्वरो निर्मितः।
एषापि स्वयमेव तुल्यरमणाभावाद्वराकी हता
कोऽर्थश्चेतसि वेधसा विनिहितस्तन्व्यास्तुन तन्वता।। (verse 14)

"Did God give a thought before deciding to shape this slender girl? Who knows? He did not care to loose a huge stock of beauty in shaping her. He must have worked hard to make her. This way he incurred a huge loss (loosing huge stock of beauty). In addition to this, he made things difficult for young men. He created such a malady for them (their attraction towards the girl) that it become impossible for them not to get afflicted. They were consumed in their desire to seek her. To add to her misery she on account of her beauty failed to get a matching groom and thus faded away. How come God creates such damsels without a matching groom! He ought not have indulged in such an improper experiment."

The verse is beautiful and full of refreshing sentiment. But the whole verse is flawed due to the improper use of a single word. That word is 'Slender' (तन्वी). A Slender girl cannot be an object of utmost physical beauty. Had the author of the verse, Dharmakirti, used a Damsel (सुन्दरी) instead of Slender (तन्वी) the verse would have attained propriety. Ksemendra by quoting these verses places before us the meaning of propriety as well as impropriety.

The author wants to convey to us in no uncertain terms that in absence of propriety a poetic composition or a literary work loses its power and beauty in the same way as.

कण्ठे मेखलया नितम्बफलके तारेण हारणे वा,
पाणौ नूपुरबन्धनेन चरणे केयुरपाशेन वा।
शौर्येन प्रणते रिपौ करुणया नायान्ति के हास्यता
मौचित्येन विना रुचिं प्रतनुते नालङकृतिर्नो गुणाः।।

"If a damsel wears a girdle round her neck, a dazzling necklace round her waist, an anklet in her wrist and bracelets round her ankles, who would not pass remarks on her impropriety. Similarly how can we be called brave if we beg with folded hands for peace. Thus without propriety howsoever brilliant you may write does not come up as a work of eminence."

These works to some extent indicate the importance of the element of propriety in literature. Auchit-Vichar-Charcha is a great contribution to the world literature and aesthetics. This work shall always prove to be a beacon light to all who evince an interest in the world of art and letters.

Conclusion

Thus Ksemendra in some measure has been presented before the discerning reader. Ksemendra, a poet, a histriographer, a sociologist, an incisive critic, a rheotrician, an author on meters, a recordist of daily events, a play-wright and above all a man of deep sensibilities. He was an ardent patriot who wanted to call a halt to a corrupt way of life. He seeks to denounce the knave and exhort the noble. For him Kashmir is not a mere geographical entity but a sacred centre of art, learning and literature. He would not countenence to see its prestige reduced a wee bit. For him the free flow of thoughts, ideas and opinions was a natural and evolving process of mankind. He wanted earnestly to protect them. He placed high premium on propriety in literature and in life. A true humanist, he vehemently opposed a closed society and mindset. What a pity that his land is passing into the tentacles of such a closed and fundamentalist system. A system and ideology that is against all the norms of a civilised life. Ksemendra fought with the might of his pen against such a system.

In any region or clime, in any age near or distant, Ksemendra will be remembered not only as a great icon of India's culture but as a universal representative of mankind. Ksemendra belongs to all human kind. For this universal human being, he wrote, for him, he saw dreams. For him he lived his life.

* * *

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Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra
(A brief Introduction)

Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra was established on Sharda Ashtami 2nd Spetember, 1995 in Jammu at Anand Nagar Bohri to the splendid memory of the grandeur of Sharda Mata and to strengthen among the nationalists especially the exiled community of Kashmir and to remind them of their duties.

Sharda symbolises Saraswati the Goddess of wisdom, vision and knowledge. Devi Saraswati and the Goddess of firmness (धैर्य) pluck (सामर्थ) and power (शक्ति) and Devi Durga (Parvati) are all subsumed in Sharda Mata. The objectives underlying the establishment of Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra is to rekindle the erstwhile glory of the Goddess Sharda the world over.

To accomplish this resolve as well as to preserve our glorious heritage Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra has defined the following specific objectives:

1. Construction of a Sharda Bhawan
2. Collective observance of major social, cultural and religious events.
3. Arrangements for vocational training.
4. Facilitating research activitiy in fields of culture and history.
5. Creation of a website for dissemination of knowledge.
6. Teaching and popularisation of Sharda script.
7. Establishment of a comprehensive library.
8. Creation of a Publication Division.

In the first phase we have erected a conference hall-Sharda Bhavan, on a plot of land acquired for the purpose, to carry out the regular activities of the Kendra.

Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra is running planned training programme

to make the youth self-dependent. The aim is to make the Kendra a multifaceted organisation. Thus the Kendra has imparted primary training in Electronics-Radio-T.V. assembling and repair to about hundred youths, in a one year course programme. Presently these youths are either self-employed in the trade or have joined industry by the dint of this training.

Sharda Institute of Computer Education has been opened in the Kendra premises. The Institute trains students in different aspects of Computer Education and techniques through a variety of Computer Courses. Over 400 students have received computer training todate. The institute has a well equipped Computer Laboratory.

The Kendra has actively taken up research activities. To strengthen the cultural identity of Kashmiri Pandits, debates, lectures and seminars in archeology, history, philosophy, ethics, language, literature, script (Sharda) and folklore are being organised. Sharda Pustakalaya, a library has already been opened. A special section on Kashmir to house a comprehensive collection of books is envisaged under the auspicies of the pustakalaya.

The Kendra has organised several Samohik Yagneopavit Samarohao. So far Yagneopavit Sanskar of 124 children has been performed under the programme. The aim is to mobilize the community, increase the awareness as well to discharge a social and religious obligation.

Under the Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra, Mohaotsav Committee organises the collective observance/performance of religious festivals. In this context Sharda Ashtami and Samohik Shivratri are two main festivals worth mentioning. People from all walks of life participate in these programme, and benefit there from. Accomplished saints and well-versed scholars are invited in these programmes to enlighten the public. In addition to holding a Yagnya, two personages devoted to community cause and service are honoured on Sharda Ashtami with Sharda Puraskar. So far 11 persons have been so honoured as an acknowledgement of community's gratitude. A calander is released to the public on the occassion of Maha Shiva Ratri.

Teaching and popularising the original script of Kashmir Sharda is one of the committed activities of Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra. Classes are held of and on for the purpose. Occasional arrangements are made for imparting training in Sanskrit including spoken Sanskrit.

In furtherance of efforts in preservation of culture and ethos publication of books on various aspects has been undertaken. Two monographs "Sharda" and "Herath- akh-zaan" have already been published in the Sharda Granth Mala Series. Two more monographs "Kshemendra" and "Umanagri" are being released on Sharda Ashtami (11th September 2005). The publication division has also brought out introductory sheets on Shriya Bhatt, Lalitadatya and Guru Teg Bahadur.

Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra is run by a registered trust under whose direction all activities are conducted by an executive headed by an elected Chairman. Several committees have been formed to look after the different activities in a systematic manner. The committees are :

1. Vocation Training Committee
2. Social Reform and Cultural Committee
3. Construction and Fund Committee.
4. Festival Committee
5. Research and Library Committee

All Committees are active in their alloted fields and are working overtime to make the Kendra a vibrant Cultural Centre.

Ancient Temple of Goddess Sharda at Shardi (POK)

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